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ABSTRACT

An overview of the Swedish program for research in the field of higher education is presented. The research program deals with questions concerning the role of higher education in society, the design and governance of the system of higher education, the environment and working methods of research and of teaching, and the interplay between research and development organization and planning. These problem areas are described briefly and it is explained that knowledge reviews and empirical studies are used in order to gradually develop and refine concepts and thought models that contribute to the understanding of higher education and of its role in society. The account concludes with four appendices on the research program's extent and the distribution of funds between areas and disciplines, a list of the current research projects, what conferences and problem area meetings have been held in recent years, and an up-to-date list of the research program's knowledge and problem reviews. (Author/PHR)

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INFORMATION ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE SWEDISH PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

AN OVERVIEW

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Research into higher education has been allocated a small part of the higher education sector's R & D budget (c. 10 %) annually since the beginning of the 1970's. The aim of the research programme is to contribute to an increased understanding of the character, conditions, and impact of the activity of higher education, and to support the development of a coherent knowledge tradition for this field. Thereby the research programme constitutes an important complement to other R & D work, and to the long-term planning and reform work in the field of higher education.

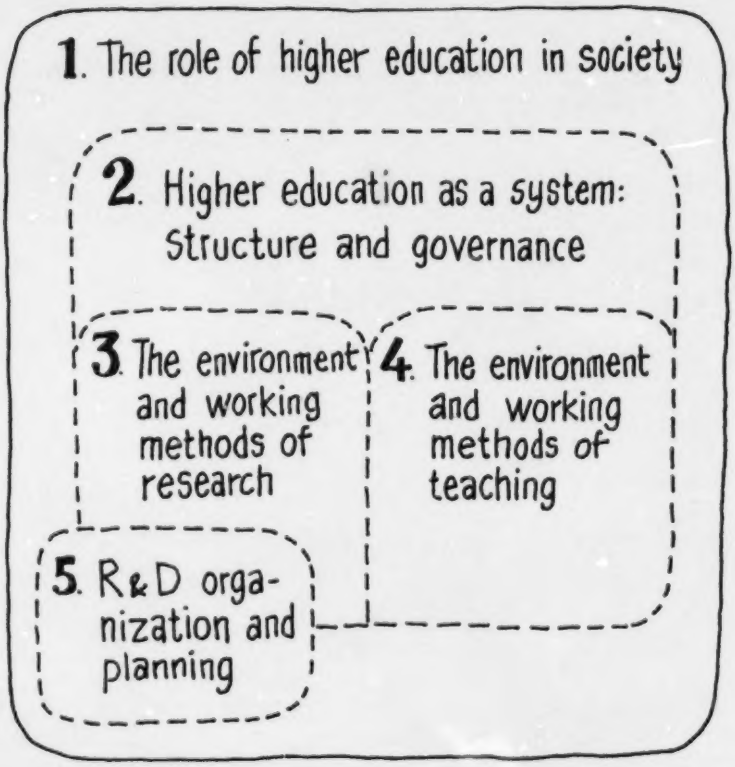
The research programme deals with questions concerning the role of higher education in society, the design and governance of the system of higher education, the environment and working methods of research and of teaching, and the interplay between R & D organization and planning. Work in the programme goes on continuously and is not directly tied to current reform work. The five problem areas (see the next page) are worked by means of knowledge reviews and empirical studies in order to gradually develop and refine concepts and thought models which contribute to the understanding of higher education and of its role in society.

National Board of Universities and Colleges
R & D unit

P.O. Box 45501
S-104 30 Stockholm SWEDEN

PHONE
08-24 85 60

Problem areas for research into higher education


1. The role of higher education in society
2. Higher education as a system: structure and governance
3. The environment and working methods of research
4. The environment and working methods of teaching
5. R&D organization and planning

Short descriptions of the direction of research in the different problem areas are given below. The account concludes with a description of the programme's working methods and results. More substantial surveys regarding individual research projects, publication lists, etc are given in special information bulletins.

At the end of this information bulletin there are four appendices: 1) the research programme's extent and the distribution of funds between areas and disciplines, 2) a list of the current research projects, 3) what conferences and problem area meetings have been held in recent years, and 4) an up-to-date list of the research programme's knowledge and problem reviews.

SITUATION REPORT BY PROBLEM AREAS

The role of higher education in society. Area 1 mainly contains studies of the role of higher education in working life. Initially it was mostly a question of relatively simple follow-up studies concerning the importance of education for the individual's occupational choice, income, and subsequent study interest. A couple of recently started projects have the ambition of clarifying how knowledge and values of importance for the professional role are learnt in the university training for doctors, economists, engineers and psychologists. What is being illustrated is, first, the students' concept formation and knowledge development and, second, how students acquire attitudes and values concerning what is essential to the professions. Within this problem area the National Board of Universities and Colleges (NBUC/UHÄ) also tries to initiate, in co-operation with other interested bodies, studies of current and conceivable changes in the division of labour in different sectors of society, and of their consequences for the work of higher education.

Higher education as a system. In area 2 questions concerning institutional organization are dealt with, and interest here is focused on, among other things, the interaction of the formal and the informal features of the process of governance.

Historical analyses and international comparisons are of importance here, and in recent years Sweden has been co-operating in an increasing number of international, comparative studies of university and college organization. One issue where studies have been sought by the research programme's advisory groups concerns higher education as a part of public administration. What is the combined effect on higher education of the new rules for public administration in general (e g the Laws on the Joint Regulation of Working Life and on Security of Employment)?

Another issue which has come to prominence recently (and which also affects the two areas of the research programme which follow immediately) concerns the knowledge traditions of different programmes of higher education. Studies are now on the way which, among other things, aim to clarify what values and attitudes characterize a number of new programmes of higher education, and what fundamental ideas about knowledge, people, and society they express. The intention is that such surveys will clarify the widening of the concept of higher education which has taken place, and create better conditions for the research and further accumulation of knowledge for the new programmes and concerning higher education as a whole.

In areas 3 and 4 the Environment and working methods of research and of teaching are studied. Research as an activity in higher education has been treated in a couple of knowledge reviews and a couple of major empirical studies (on the role of research training in some of the human sciences and on interdisciplinary groups in research in the natural sciences), which are being completed now. The area has a high priority for new research efforts during the next few years.

Up to now education as an activity has been focused in this research programme to a much greater degree than research. Here problems concerning the structuring of knowledge content, concept formation and learning, the design of the study and the teaching process, and the role of "critical training" in different study programmes are dealt with.

Area 5, R & D organization and planning, is the most recent. Here questions concerning the function and organization of sectoral research in the universities, and concerning the interplay between planning and knowledge development are studied. Research efforts in this area are justified both by the sudden, great importance of sectoral research as a feature of the universities, and by the need to find tenable principles for the higher education sector's own R & D work.

WORKING METHODS

In order to develop knowledge about higher education within the broad problem areas indicated here, contributiors are needed from many different university subjects. In the last six years researchers from twelve different subjects in the social and the human sciences have been engaged on the Swedish research into higher education. Thus the programme has a clear interdisciplinary character and strives after a close interaction between the outlooks and perspectives of a number of disciplines in the treatment of the different problem areas concerning the organization of higher education. There is a survey of the research programme's extent within different problem areas and scientific subjects in appendix 1, and a list of the research projects now in progress in appendix 2. In the program 17 doctoral theses have been presented so far. At present further 16 are in preparation, and it is expected most will be completed during 1979 or 1980.

An important means of directing and managing the research programme is the problem area meetings, i e conferences or seminars, where researchers from different subjects engage in discussions together with the higher education sector's practitioners and planners. The problem area meetings usually lead to a summing-up of conclusions from research carried out and of the practical consequences of these conclusions, and to the definition of new issues for subsequent research work.

Quite a considerable number of such conferences have been held in recent years regarding the different problem areas (appendix 3). The three conferences planned for the autumn of 1979 can be mentioned as examples of the themes concerned: "Long-term effects of higher education", "Studies of knowledge traditions", and "Concept formation and critical training". What's special about these conferences is that they are joint events for the users and the performers of research; that there are as many practitioners/planners as researchers among the participants; that the researchers taking part represent a large number of different subjects; that there are, among planners/practitioners, representatives of both the local and the central level; and that at some of the conferences there are also participants from abroad.

Since 1972 the research programme has also had two special advisory groups, which also work between the conferences. There is a group of planners, which consists mainly of vice-chancellors and NBUC department directors. There is also a group of researchers consisting of professors of five of the disciplines participating in the research programme. Among the tasks of the advisory groups is the evaluation and setting of priorities for the orientation of the research. The written opinions of researchers not involved in the programme are also taken into account in the process of allocating priorities.

The process outlined here has been developed to further a dialogue - both verbally and in writing - between researchers and practitioners. The directing of the research demands a knowledgable and continuous involvement from both planners and researchers. Of course interplay is also needed between researchers in different problem areas and research groups from different subjects in order to develop - in close contact with international research - a successively clearer and more coherent knowledge tradition for the field of higher education. The dialogue between researchers and practitioners is, on the other hand, necessary both for the direction of research and for the using of results.

WHAT IS THE USE?

It is important to make clear what effects can and ought to be expected from the activity described here. In conclusion some comments are offered both on the principal forms used for the presentation of results, and on what can be meant by useful results.

a) There are two principal forms for distributing results from the research programme in print - apart from the information bulletins, the R & D catalogue and articles in journals like "Forskning om utbildning" (Research on Education) - viz research reports, and knowledge and problem reviews. The research reports are published in scientific journals and in the series of occasional papers produced by the university departments involved, while knowledge and problem reviews are usually published in the NBUC's series of reports (there is an English language series in addition to the ordinary one).

The purpose of the knowledge and problem reviews is, among other things, to document and clarify the differences in mode of describing and analysing fundamental issues of higher education which exist within and between different groups of researchers and practitioners. The two published so far this year can be mentioned as examples of knowledge and problem reviews. One, which partly has the character of a discussion paper, is called "Division of Labour, Class Stratification, and Knowledge Development" and is by Professor Edmund Dahlström. The other gives an account in book form of a major international conference arranged by the NBUC and is called "Research into Higher Education: Processes and Structures". An up-to-date list of the research programme's knowledge and problem reviews is given in appendix 4.

b) So what is, in fact, the use of research into higher education? In what way are the results used? Broadly, there are two ways of looking at how research is used. According to one view research is used to solve problems. The customer defines his problem and states what knowledge is missing, whereupon the researcher helps to solve the problem by producing the missing knowledge. In such cases the knowledge development ought to be clearly steered by the customer's current questions and decision frames, and thereby often acquires the character of development work or evaluation. According to the other view research is used to aid reflection and understanding, to provide new perspectives and to thereby clarify and elucidate problems. This assumes a more long-term, independent sort of research, steered by conferences and seminars.

Where research into the human sciences is concerned, and research into higher education can, of course, be seen as an example of this, it seems the second view, i e that the enlightenment function may be as important as the problem-solving function, has become more generally accepted recently. However, experience also shows that the function of more independent knowledge-building research can easily be questioned as, in the short-term at any rate, it is not as apparent and tangible as the function of purely result- and measure-oriented research. Continued discussion of, among other things, demarcation and forms for steering of different sub-programmes within R & D for higher education is therefore important. The balance between development work and more long-term, independent research is, as the NBUC emphasized in its expert report "Research Planning and Research Organization" (NBUC Report 1978:12, p 40), "one of the most important questions concerning the organization of sectoral research".

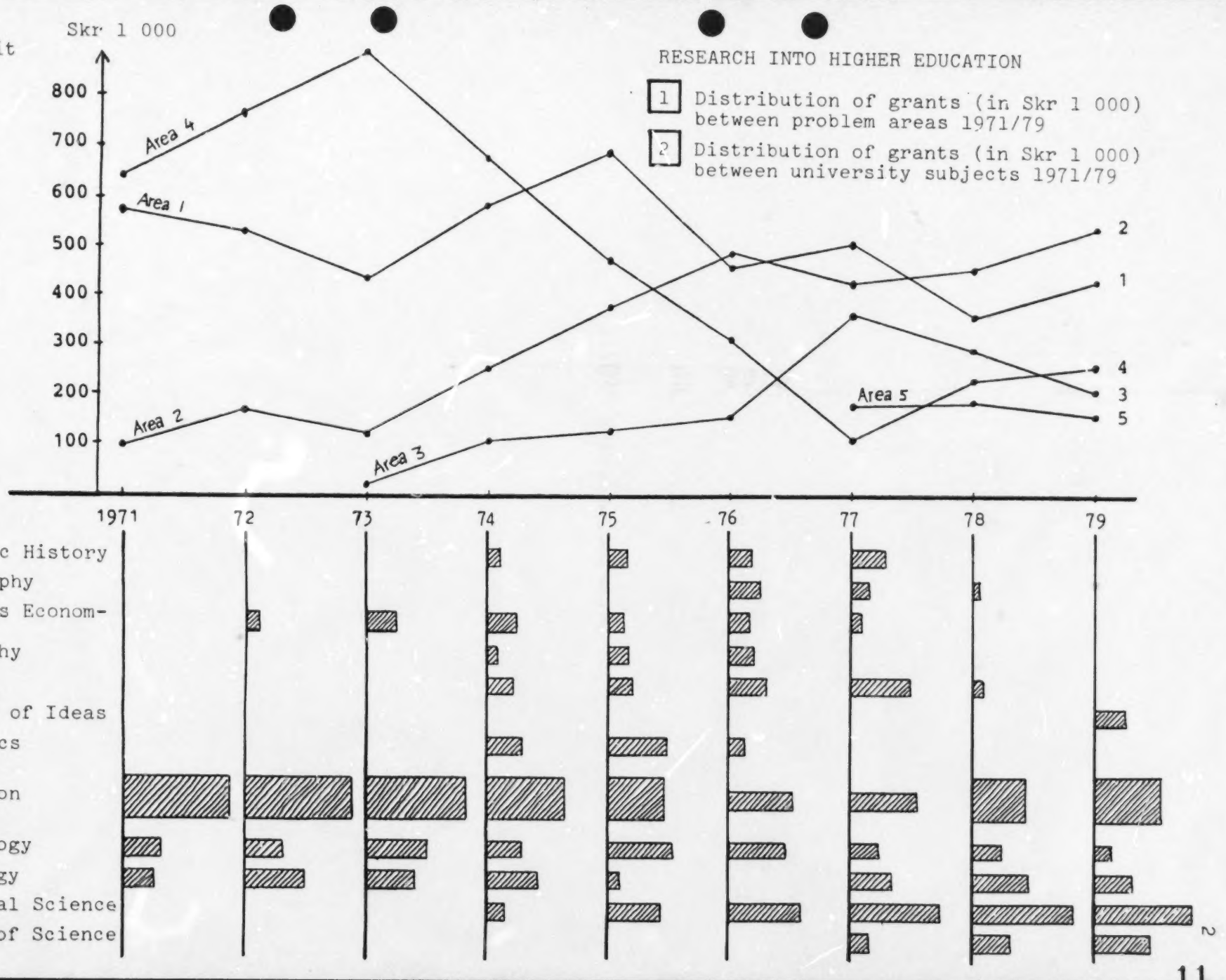
Eskil Björklund

1979-06-27

Research into higher education.
Distribution of the projects between problem areas 1975/76, 1977/78, 1979/80, and (estimated) 1980/81.
(Skr 1 000)

PROBLEM AREA	1975/76	1977/78	1979/80	1980/81 (estim.)
1. The role of higher education in society	690	675	435	500
2. Higher education as a system: structure and governance	376	435	540	600
3. The environment and working methods of research	124	355	200	300
4. The environment and working methods of teaching	475	110	250	200
5. R&D organization and planning	-	-	160	200
Planning of research, conferences, knowledge reviews etc	235	225	175	260
TOTAL	1 900	1 800	1 760	2 060
Percentage of the entire R&D budget	15	9	10	10

NBUC
R&D unit
1979



RESEARCH INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

1 Distribution of grants (in Skr 1 000) between problem areas 1971/79

2 Distribution of grants (in Skr 1 000) between university subjects 1971/79

Research into higher education: current projects

	Expected to be completed in 1979/80	Expected to continue in 1980/81
Area 1. The role of higher education in society		
The role of higher education in the development of the individual (Prof. David Magnusson, Psychology)		x
Post-secondary education and background (Prof. Torsten Husén, Education)	x	
Aspects of education and the division of labour (Ass. Prof. Bengt Gesser, Sociology)	x	
Education and the labour market (Ass. Prof. Bengt-Christer Ysander, Economics)	x	
The expansion of the education sector in Sweden during the 20th century (Prof. Lennart Jörberg, Economic History)	x	
The equalizing effects of the educational reforms (Ass. Prof. Ingemar Fägerlind, Education)	x	
Higher education, the labour market, and economic development (Prof. Ingemar Ståhl, Economics)	x	
Conceptions of reality - a study of cognitive changes in university students (Prof. Ference Marton, Education)		x
Long-term effects of higher education (Prof. Sten Henrysson, Education)		x
Higher education students' evaluation of their education (Prof. Kjell Härnqvist, Education)		x

	Expected to be completed in 1979/80	Expected to continue in 1980/81
Area 2. Higher education as a system		
Alternative educational structures in the northern educational region (Ass. Prof. Nils Häggström, Geography)	x	
Production and productivity of Swedish universities (Prof. Ingemar Ståhl, Economics)	x	
The university as an organization: system and environment (Ass. Prof. Jan-Erik Lane, Political Science)	x	
Obstacles to innovation within the university organization (Prof. Anders Edström, Business Economics)	x	
A study of the origins of the reform of higher education (Prof. Olof Ruin, Political Science)	x	
A study of the implementation of a reform of higher education (Dr. Yngve Myrman, Political Science)	x	
Problems of management and decision-making in the new organization of higher education (Prof. Dick Ramström, Business Economics)	x	
Attitudes in higher education. A survey of post-secondary teachers (Ass. Prof. Jan-Erik Lane, Political Science)	x	
From cultivation to qualification. A study of the development of Swedish universities (Dr. Lennart Svensson, Sociology)	x	
Implementation of higher education reforms (Dr. Ladislav Cerych, Education)		x
Ideology, science and society (Prof. Sven-Eric Liedman, History of Ideas)		x

	Expected to be completed in 1979/80	Expected to continue in 1980/81
Educational and research ideologies (Ass. Prof. Aant Elzinga, Theory of Science)		x
The link with research and with working life (Prof. Edmund Dahlström, Sociology)		x
A book on Roskilde University Centre (Jan Annerstedt, Lecturer, Political Science)	x	
Area 3. The environment and working methods of research		
The results of research training (Prof. Birgitta Odén, History)	x	
Interdisciplinary research groups (Dr. Jan Bärmark, Dr. Göran Wallén, Theory of Science)	x	
Style of problem solving, research focus and research ability (Psychologist Margot Bengtsson, Psychology)		x
Colloquia on scientific development, the organization of research and research careers (Ass. Prof. Aant Elzinga, Theory of Science)	x	
Research Ethics: professionalization or politization (Dr. Margareta Bertilsson, Sociology)	x	
Area 4. The environment and working methods of teaching		
The pedagogics of problem solving (Prof. Lennart Sjöberg, Psychology)	x	
Criticial training in higher education (Prof. Sören Halldén, Philosophy)	x	
Study skill in mechanics (Ass. Prof. Lennart Svensson, Education)		x
Study interest (Prof. Lennart Sjöberg, Psychology)		x
Teacher training and teachers' work (Prof. Ulf Lundgren, Education)	x	

	Expected to be completed in 1979/80	Expected to continue in 1980/81
Area 5. R & D organization and planning		
Practitioners and social scientists - the use made in planning of the results of social science (Prof. Edmund Dahlström, Sociology)	x	
R & D and public decision-making (Dr. Björn Wittrock, Political Science)		x

Research into higher education

Problem area meetings: concern

Area
↓

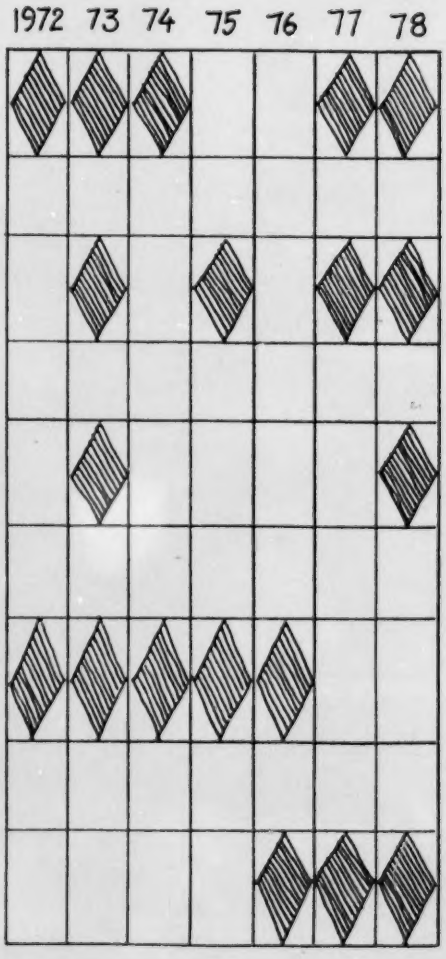
1 The role of higher education in society
(Sociology, economics, econ history, psychology, education)

2 Higher education as a system
(Political science, sociology, economics, geography, theory of science, history of ideas)

3 The environment and working forms of research
(Psychology, sociology, history, education, history of ideas, theory of science)

4 The environment and working methods of teaching
(Education, psychology, sociology, philosophy)

5 R & D organization and planning
(Sociology, political science)



Knowledge and problem reviews from the programme
RESEARCH INTO HIGHER EDUCATION
(Distributed by the R & D unit; No.s 5, 7, 12 and 16 are in English, the others in Swedish)

Year	No.	Title	Problem Area
1973	1	The activity forms for research training, UKÄ Report 1973:1 (160 p)	3
	2	Evaluation of a reform of higher education, UKÄ Report 1973:2 (277 p)	2, 4
1975	3	Methodological problems in studies of the relation between higher education and the labour market, UKÄ Report 1975:1 (83 p)	1
	4	Methodological problems in university studies in groups, UKÄ Report 1975:16 (195 p)	4
1976	5	Strategies for research and development in higher education, Educational Research Symposium, Swets & Zeitlinger, Amsterdam, 1976 (279 p)	2, 4, 5
	6	The specification of problems and the initiation of research for the field of education, UHÄ et al., Oct. 1976 (91 p)	5
1977	7	The creation and support of a research community on higher education, Martin Trow, R & D for higher education 1977:3 (16 p)	3, 5
	8	Concept formation and learning in some university subjects, UHÄ Report 1977:3 (156 p)	4
	9	The research nexus. The link between research and undergraduate teaching, Bengt Abrahamsson, UHÄ Report 1977:10 (81 p)	3, 4
	10	Research into the organization of higher education, UHÄ Report 1977:20 (174 p)	2, 5
	11	The role of higher education in society, report from a project seminar, Nov. 1977, stencil (30 p)	1

Year	No.	Title	Problem Area
1978	12	Learning and earning (M J Bowman, Å Sohlman, B-C Ysander), Three essays in the economics of education, National Board of Universities and Colleges, 1978 (272 p)	1
	13	Studies of research and planning systems, and studies of concept formation and the development of values, report from a project seminar, Oct. 1978, stencil (21 p)	1, 3, 5
	14	Working life - education, Conference introduction and notes, Leif Grahm, UHÄ, 1978, stencil (32 + 19 p)	1
1979	15	Division of labour, class stratification and knowledge development, Edmund Dahlström, UHÄ Report 1979:2 (38 p)	1, 2
	16	Research into higher education: Processes and structures, National Board of Universities and Colleges, 1979 (358 p)	1, 2, 5

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